

[The Haskins Family]

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Miami, Florida

Car Repairer, [F.E.C.Rr.?)

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THE HASKINS FAMILY

The modest, [stucco?] bungalow occupied by the Haskins family has a well kept hedge of auralia and profusion of vari-colored tropical shrubbery growing in the small front yard between the house and the street. There are no side-walks but a short, paved walk leads straight to the house, which is built on the front of the lot; there is a small cottage in rear.

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The house is one story, of Spanish type architecture and painted cream color with green trimmings. Three stone steps lead up to the stoop; there is no front porch. On each side of the stoop are stone urns in which large ferns grow in abundance. Wrought iron lanterns hang on either side of the front door. A short roof painted green is just over the door.

The Haskins family consists of Paul, the husband; Mizpah, the wife; and two children, Murdock and Cecelia.

As I knock on the screen door, I hear a radio playing loudly in the living room. A clean cut blue-eyed youth is sitting in a rocker near the radio. He comes to the door.

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"Is Mrs. Haskins at home?" I ask.

"No, she isn't, but I's expectin her back within a short time. Won't you come in and wait?" he replies pleasantly, offering a chair. "I know you're one of my sister's neighbors for I've seen you before, even tho we haven't been introduced. I's her sister Mickey from Key West."

I tried to hide my surprise for I must admit I thought Mickey a boy as she is fully clothed in boy's khaki colored pants, white shirt, and boy's shoes. Her dark hair is cut in mannish style, combed straight back off the forehead, and she is very husky and healthy looking.

"Are you visiting Mrs. Haskins?" I ask.

"Yes, I expect to stay for the summer," she replies, turning down the radio. "Y'know, every minute I's in the house, I keep that radio going when I get up in the morning, first thing I do is turn it on. If I come in late at night, I turn it on until the local stations sign off; then I get an out of town station. I have to play it low tho, because Paul must get his sleep, but I like the [gol-dern?] thing played full when I's alone in the house."

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The living room in which we are sitting extends across the front of the house. To the left side of the room is an open fire-place which shows signs of recent use. Near the fire-place is a large overstuffed wing chair and matching ottoman upholstered in 3 dark brown cloth. Beside the chair is a small table containing magazines, among which are copies of Good Housekeeping and Minicam, a photographic publication. A floor lamp with a white shade stands next to the chair. The radio is on a small table in the corner. A three-piece white and brown painted wicker living room set is also in this end of the room and matches a long center table which stands lengthwise. On it are a vase filled with cut flowers and photographs of the children. At the other end of the room is another three-piece wicker living room set painted green; the cushions are covered with cretonne. An empty bird cage stands in the far corner. A worn rug is on the floor in the center of the room. The floor around the rug is stained with light varnish. Altho not luxuriously furnished, the room is orderly and clean. Cream colored ruffled curtains and fringed shades hang at the windows. The stippled walls are decorated in harmonious colors. On the wall in a gold frame is a picture of an old church which has been worked out in hand embroidery.

"That was made many years ago by Paul's mother," says Mickey. "He treasures it above all else. Come on in and I'll show you the Seven Dwarfs. There's no tellin when sis'll get back, she said she wouldn't stay long but she is goin to stop in and see my cousin. When those two Key West Conchs get together, they don't know when to stop talkin."

I follow Mickey thru a bedroom which leads off the right side 4 of the living room. The furnishings consist of a double iron bed painted green, a dresser and chair painted the same color. The bed is neatly made and covered with a green tufted spread. A congoleum rug which looks quite new, is on the floor. To the left of the bedroom a door leads into the bathroom, which, like all the other rooms, is spotlessly clean. The walls are painted white with blue trimmings; the old fashioned tub is of white porcelain; in front of the lavatory there is a throw rug; blue and white linoleum covers the floor. A built-in medicine chest with

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mirror is above the lavatory. The bathroom is not connected with any rooms but the one bedroom.

Adjoining the bedroom is a sleeping porch, shaded with wooden awnings. This porch extends clear across the back of the house. One end is furnished with a double iron bed painted cream color, and an iron cot. The neatly made beds are covered with crisp white spreads. A congoleum rug is on the floor at this end of the porch. Near the bed is a small table on which stands a boudoir lamp; a chest of drawers painted cream color and chair to match stand against a wall. A mirror hangs over the chest. At the other end of the porch are a Maytag washing machine, another empty bird cage, and a small table cluttered with two electric irons and various odds and ends. A clothespin bag hangs on the wall and a large, round basket filled with freshly washed clothes is on the floor. A folding ironing-board stands against the wall. The varnished floor is bare at this end of the porch.

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"Now, here's the increase we've had in the family," says Mickey pointing to a large box on the floor in which lay a beautiful long haired white dog with brown spots. Seven little puppies are scrambling around her, all trying to nurse at the same time. All of them are white with spots except one, and it is black.

"Murdock christened them the Seven Dwarfs . . . this is "Lady!" Mickey pets the mother dog who is wearing a worried expression because Mickey picks up one of her puppies and hands it to me.

"You can have one if you like, but it would have to be a girl dog 'cause she only had two males and they're already promised," says Mickey as she puts the puppy back in the box.

"Sis is very fond of birds, but she has no luck with them. She had the prettiest pair of grey love birds before she moved here. One of them got sick and died; it wasn't long before the other one died, too, from grief, I reckon."

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From this end of the porch, a door leads into a small kitchen. The furnishings consist of a 5-burner oil stove with a stationary oven at the right side, a kerosene water heater, a good sized wooden ice-box painted white, a white wooden kitchen cabinet, built-in dish closet, white porcelain kitchen table and two chairs. The floor is covered with brown and white checked linoleum. Crisp white curtains hang at two small windows over the sink. A large aluminum 6 pot containing black beans is on the stove.

"We're cookin Paul's favorite dish today, '[Frijolies negro con Arroz Maria]' . . that's yellow rice and black beans, we cook pork chops in the sauce," says Mickey as she stirs the beans.

Adjoining the kitchen is a small dining room. A round oak table with six chairs to match, an old fashioned side-board with mirror, and a small set of shelves containing bric-a-brac comprise the furnishings. The side-board is filled with shining glassware and a vase of cut flowers is in the center of the lace covered table. There are two windows with curtains that match those in the living room.

As we re-enter the living room a tan Chevrolet Sedan stops in front of the house.

"There's sis now," says Mickey as Mrs. Haskins comes up the walk.

Mizpah Haskins does not look her 32 years. Small in stature, she has a very neat appearance; her freshly laundered print dress is becoming and harmonizes with her tan silk hose and brown leather pumps. Her black hair has a boyish bob and she wears white pearl earrings. She has sharp, brown eyes. Unlike her sister, she is very thin.

"She keeps goin all day long . . I'll bet she's in and out of that car 25 times a day," says Mickey.

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"Thought I'd never get away from Alice," says Mizpah as she enters the living room. "Have you been waitin long, Mrs. Burnell? I'll be with you in just a few minutes." She busies herself about the kitchen, telling Mickey what to do in the preparation of lunch.

"Paul comes home to lunch; he likes good hearty meals and he needs them too, for he works very hard," says Mizpah as she comes back into the living room and sits in the rocker. "He has been a car repairer for the Florida East Coast for the past 14 years. His hours are from seven to four every day with an hour for lunch. Of course, he might be called on the job at any hour of the night if necessary and he has to be ready to go at a moment's notice in case of accident. If he wants a vacation, he has to take it without pay and that's not so good. He has taken only one in all the years he's worked for the railroad. I think he needs a rest and I's goin to make him take two weeks off this summer. The men who are paid monthly get two weeks off with pay, but those who are paid semi-monthly get none unless they take it without pay. But he has steady work all year 'round and that's something to be thankful for. He could get passes on the railroad but he seldom takes advantage of this, for most all our folks live in Key West and if we take a trip we go there in our car.

"Paul gets paid pretty well for his work and we make our income cover our needs. He lets me handle the money. I try to spend it wisely and put by what I can for a rainy day. I reckon we spend too 8 much on food. My grocery bills run high, for I cook three good meals a day and all of my family have good healthy appetites.

"When we were first married, Paul worked for a wholesale house in Key West and we could hardly manage on the salary he made there. He was dissatisfied so he studies at night, thru a correspondence course, and learned this trade[md]train mechanic. When he completed the course, he had no trouble in gettin a job with the railroad. He worked in Key West until about three years ago, when he was transferred to the shops at Fort Lauderdale, and later to Miami. At first, I didn't like it here at all, but now I's gettin used to it. I didn't care much for Lauderdale either, altho we have made a lot of friends there. We

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rented this house because it's near the shops and too, the children don't have very far to go to school.

"Paul is an exceptionally good man, a real home body. He spends very little time or money on the outside and he's extremely fond of children. If he'd have his way, I'd have a baby every year. Now I like children, too, but I believe that people with a limited income shouldn't have large families. Considerin our income, I think two children are sufficient.

"Paul and I agree that school training is very important and we hope to be able to give the children a better education than either of us have. We want Murdock to study electrical engineering and go to college if possible. Celia is so young, we haven't 9 made plans for her as yet. I believe in lettin a child choose his own trade or profession. Of course, the parents should offer suggestions toward their choosin but I believe it is a mistake for them to insist on a certain course of study for which their child has no preference. Now, if Celia shows an inclination to be studious, I'll do all within my power to send her to college when the time comes.

"I went thru the 10th grade in school and could have gone higher but I didn't like school. Paul went thru the 12th grade. We were both born and raised in Key West. Some people think the city would really grow and amount to something if they could bury about 10 people down there, who control everything. I find livin in Miami higher than Key West. For instance, we paid only \$10 a month rent there, whereas we pay \$30 rent here. We rented this house for one year, furnished, altho some of the furniture is mine.

"While we lived in Key West we got along nicely without a car but when Paul was transferred to Lauderdale we bought this Chevrolet. It would be hard to get along without a car here. Sometimes, he takes it in the morning, or if I want the car, I keep it and call for him at four o'clock. I like to visit around a little in the afternoon, or go to town. He said he'd walk home to lunch today, the weather is so pleasant.

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"We hope, some day, to own a home of our own, possibly in Key West . . . that is if they ever build the railroad back and Paul can 10 ever get transferred down there again. I just love to 'piddle' around with a flower garden. If I'd have my way I'd always keep a bouquet of freshly cut flowers in every room. To me, it gives a cheerful, homey atmosphere. There is very little room for a garden here tho; we have no back yard to speak of. The space between the two houses is used for clothes lines. In Key West, Murdock and I kept a lovely flower garden and did all the work ourselves.

"I am thankful to say we have good health so we spend very little money for doctors and medicines. Celia did have whooping cough last fall and the cough lasted so long I took her to Dr. Nuzum. He said one of her lungs was affected, and advised me to put her to bed for a month. He prescribed cod-liver oil capsules and she got along just fine. She was six years old last November and began school this mid-term semester.

"Here's Murdock coming home for lunch, is everything ready, Mickey?" she calls to the kitchen.

"Bring 'em on sis, everything's O. K. I set a plate for Mrs. Burnell, too," replies Mickey.

Murdock is a fine healthy looking boy, taller and more robust than the average boy of thirteen. Blonde haired and blue-eyed, he is neatly dressed in light blue shirt and dark trousers. He is well mannered and after a few words, he walks into the kitchen.

"Paul gets off at 12:30, so Murdock eats and goes on back to 11 school. I keep goin all day long. I get up at quarter of six and cook a hearty breakfast for Paul. After he leaves, its time to get the children up for school. Mickey likes to sleep late in the morning. I take Celia to school then I tidy up the rooms and plan my marketing, which I do later in the morning. Since I bought the washing machine, I do all the laundry at home. I used to send the clothes out to the wet wash, but I like this ever so much better. The clothes smell so

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sweet and fresh when I take them off the line[md]different than when they come back from the laundry.

"Here's Paul comin up the street now," she exclaims.

Paul Haskins looks older than his 35 years. He is tall and well built and his thin black hair is gray at the temples. He has a rather prominent nose, large brown eyes and is fairly good looking. He is wearing khaki colored shirt and trousers that are neat and clean. As he enters the room, he smiles pleasantly. Genial and attractive, he makes one feel welcome the minute he speaks.

"Got company I see, that's fine," he says to his wife as he kisses her. "How's the world treatin yuh, honey?"

"Paul, Mrs. Burnell is goin to write about us if we are willin, its for a book or somethin," says Mizpah.

"Well, well, that's fine but there's nothin specially interestin about me, just a plain everyday workman but you're welcome to write us up if you care to; now when it comes to this little wife 12 of mine, then you've really got somethin to write about," as he gives her a hug.

"Paul's an awful jollier, don't mind him," says his wife in confusion.

"C'son let's eat, I's so hungry I could eat the side of a house," says Paul. "Come try my wife's cookin, Mrs. Burnell, she's the best little cook in the world."

"I'll stay right here in the living room until you folks finish," I reply.

"No, you won't either, there's nothin makes us as happy as havin company and especially at meal time. If I had my way I would keep the house filled with company all the time," he says, leading me into the dining room as Mickey puts an immense platter of yellow rice and black beans on the table. Paul proceeds to serve this in large helpings.

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"Y'know, its the funniest thing, these new fangled ideas people have about cookin and diet. When we lived in Lauderdale, my wife went to a cookin school and she tried some of the recipes she learned there but none of us liked 'em," says Paul.

"We all like the Cuban style cookin best," says Mizpah. "I have to pack lunch for Celia because she won't eat the things they serve in the school cafeteria. I realize that we need vegetables 13 in our diet, but there's no use for me to cook 'em for no one here will eat 'em.

"Well, I say cook things your own style and don't bother about those new ideas," says Paul. "We're strong and healthy, aren't we? Well, that's sufficient proof that your cookin is alright."

"Do you have a hobby of any kind, and what amusements do you enjoy most?" I ask Paul.

"My hobby is takin snapshots," he answers promptly. "There's nothin gives me a greater kick than to go out in the country and take pictures of the family, or scenery that's specially pretty. I bought a new Eastman lately and it's a honey. You must see some of the pictures before you leave.

"I enjoy ball games of all kinds, too, especially a good football game. My wife and kiddies enjoy the movies, but I don't care about pictures shows at all. If I could afford it, I'd follow up the races, too. Occasionally, we go to the dog races, but I don't do much bettin for I don't have money to lose. I think Bingo is fascinating, too.

"Politics?" says Paul. "Now, that's a subject I'd hate to get started on. We're both Democrats all the way back, and I hope to see that party continue to govern the country. Certainly can't say much for the Hoover Administration. Our local politics have me disgusted, I must admit . . trouble is so many people take no 14 interest but I believe they

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are wakin up to facts now. We never fail to vote and I do a good deal of readin in order to keep up with politics in general.

“Reckon my time's up, honey, you needn't bother to take me back. The weather is so nice I'll walk those few blocks. You can call for me at four o'clock tho,” says Paul as he kisses his wife good-bye.

Mizpah's eyes sparkle as she watches him walk down the street. It is easily seen that this home is one of happiness and contentment, the husband regarding the love of his wife and family as one of the most precious things in life.

“If I still had my dad, I'd feel like my happiness was about complete,” muses Mizpah. My mother and three sisters live in Key West and a married brother lives in Tampa. My sister Mickey is goin to stay with us for awhile. She helps me a whole lot around the house and Paul is happy to have her stay . . he thinks I work too hard. Reckon you think it strange that Mickey dresses like she does, but she just hates girls' clothes. Of course, when she went to school she had to wear them but the minute she'd get home, she'd change again. She's always wanted to be a boy, even when she was a just a kid. I've told her she'll have to start wearin' girls' clothes now . . she can't go on that way much longer. She never liked school either and left just before she came to Miami.

“The tragic way my dad's life ended is something I've never 15 gotten over. He was sheriff of Monroe County and was servin his tenth year when he was killed accidentally, at the age of 56. He owned a yacht named ‘Barbara May.’ He took some friends on a trip to Bird Key, leavin them on the key to hunt bird eggs. Later in the day he made the trip back to get them. Of course, the yacht was anchored in deep water and he wanted to go ashore himself and get his friends. A high wind came up, and the boat capsized. Dad was an expert swimmer but he didn't stand a chance in the rough water. He was dashed against a large rock and the high waves hurled the boat against his body, crushin his chest. It was

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just awful . . I never will get over it, I loved him so much. He had a wonderful personality and everyone liked him.

“It was the strangest thing how a boy about 12 years old, came to our home and asked for shelter. He said his name was Jack Owens and that he had no home nor parents and would work for a living if we'd take him in. My dad just couldn't refuse, and he consented to give him a trial. The boy proved himself to be very satisfactory but we never knew anything about his former life. A man came to dad and wanted to give him \$50 towards Jack's expenses, but he refused to take it. He said, however, that he would deposit it in the bank in the boy's name, which he did. My folks always thought that the juvenile judge knew something about Jack's background. Well, the very next day after my dad was killed, Jack disappeared and we've never heard a word from him since. We've always felt that he disappeared so abruptly because he thought he would not be allowed to remain on account of something in his past life. He left a note for mother thanking her for all she had done for him and stating that she is to have the money deposited in the bank for him. Mother thought a lot of him and to this day, has never touched the money, always hoping that some day she will hear from Jack. It worries me a lot, too. I'd like to know what's become of him.

“As long as we can all stay well and Paul has steady work, I feel that we have much to be thankful for. Guess I'm what you'd call an optimist for I never let little things worry me. It doesn't do any good toward solving a problem.

“I'm afraid we are not very religious. Paul is Catholic, but he doesn't attend church. He says that if a person lives the right kind of life they don't need to be running to church all the time[md]that most of these ardent church-goers who pretend to be so religious, just go to church to show off their clothes. I am Methodist and go to church only occasionally. We were married Protestant but our marriage was blessed by the Catholic priest. That was in 1924. Murdock was born in Key West, and christened Methodist, but Celia was christened Catholic. Since we've lived in Miami, we haven't gone to church very often, I'm ashamed

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to say. Celia goes to Sunday School at the Holy Cross Episcopal Church with her little girl friend, and I like for her to go. Rev. Pennington has such a nice way with the children, he just wins them over. I realize that all of us should go to church regular, but after Paul 17 works hard all week, it seems like he enjoys relaxin on Sunday mornings. After dinner we usually take a long ride in the country or go to the beach.

"Thru the week we have our dinner at 5:30 and sometimes we go for a ride after that. We always come home by 8:30 because the children have to study. Sometimes we visit friends or have them visit us. If we stay at home, Paul likes to sit in his easy chair by the fireplace. Celia loves to put his slippers on for him while he smokes his pipe and reads. He used to sit up and read books until two and three o'clock in the morning. His eyes are bad now and I wish he would get some glasses. By the time he reads the evening paper and listens to Celia's chatter, he usually falls asleep in his chair while I put her to bed. I am on the go all day, and by the time 10 o'clock comes, I's ready to go to bed myself.

"It must be two o'clock, here's Celia comin home from school," says Mizpah.

Celia is a chubby little girl with brown eyes and straight, black hair like her mother's. Just full of pep, and forever chattering, she jumps into her mother's lap and hugs her.

"Didn't see the car at school, so I came home all by myself," she says. "I want somethin to eat," she scrambles down again and runs into the kitchen.

"I's afraid Celia's rather spoiled," says Mizpah, shaking her 18 head. "Paul says she's a 'live wire' and that just describes her perfectly. We're strict with Murdock, but that little one gets away with murder. She's her daddy's pet."

As I prepare to take leave, I thank Mizpah for everything.

"Don't mention it, and come back soon, hear!" she says as I depart.